

**Academics First: BOG Policy 400.1.5 -- Fostering Student Success
Educational Planning, Policies, and Programs Committee
UNC Board of Governors
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Workgroup

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Workgroup Charge

In February 2012, Dr. Suzanne Ortega, UNC Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs, charged the Academics First Workgroup with the task of advancing the work initiated by the UNC Faculty Assembly. The goal of the Workgroup was to recommend system-wide policies that would support campus efforts to enhance access, excellence, and undergraduate degree completion in as timely and efficient a manner as possible. Dr. Ortega asked that the Workgroup's recommendations include consideration of:

- A system-wide minimum standard for Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) and Good Academic Standing; and
- System-wide minimum standards on core academic processes, such as drop/add, course repeat, grade replacement, and withdrawal.

What did Academics First try to accomplish?

As per its charge, the Academics First workgroup examined BOG Policy and its associated regulations with the purpose of recommending system-wide policies to support campus efforts to enhance access, excellence, and undergraduate degree completion in as timely and efficient a manner as possible. The workgroup determined that "policy," the pieces that require BOG action, should be broadly defined, while "regulation," which is under the control of the President, should carry the more detailed elements.

BOG Policy 400.1.5: Fostering Student Success

- The existing policy is a series of retention and graduation standards written in 1992. It was last amended in 2007 and the corresponding regulations have not been revised since 1993.
- The Workgroup observed that the policy and regulations were duplicative and consisted primarily of a list of best practices. The Workgroup recommends that the best practices material be eliminated from the policy statement and that both documents be refocused on the academic policy issues, namely a uniform definition of Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP), Good Academic Standing, and the Course Adjustment Period and conditions for course withdrawal and course repeat.
- The proposed policy revisions and regulations recommend how to set academic integrity thresholds to promote student success (including retention and graduation), while allowing campuses some opportunity to address their specific campus needs. The intent was to greatly reduce the wide variation across campuses in their academic process regulations so UNC can better explain what UNC values to our multiple constituents.
- The Workgroup declined to set uniform limits for course withdrawal or repeat or for grade replacement or exclusion, believing the details of these policies must be left to the judgment of faculty on each campus. The proposed regulations do, however, recommend standardizing other aspects of the withdrawal and repeat policies across the system.
- The major proposed changes are:
 - SAP and Good Academic Standing is defined as a minimum 2.0 cumulative GPA (with some provision allowing students who fall below this a defined future opportunity to attain it)
 - Limited windows for Drop/Add and Course Withdrawal
 - Limited opportunities for Course Repeats and Grade Exclusion/Replacement
 - Guidelines for Financial Aid and Review of Campus Processes related to course scheduling, advising, etc.

The UNC Policy Manual
400.1.5

Fostering Student Success

The University of North Carolina's policies on student success adopted by the Board of Governors direct constituent institutions to:

- set academic progress and degree attainment as primary outcomes
- promote academic quality, rigor, and integrity;
- make possible "seamless" educational opportunities across the UNC campuses, with the North Carolina Community College system, and early college high schools

Improving retention, graduation rates, and time to degree are important aspects of such policies. However, the Board of Governors also recognizes that students come into the system from a number of different life circumstances and their paths to success vary accordingly. Policies, therefore, set parameters within which a campus can best meet the needs of its diverse student populations.

University-Wide Policies

The Board of Governors has adopted the following policies for all institutions comprising the University of North Carolina except the North Carolina School of Science and Mathematics.¹

1. Campuses will follow the credit hour limits determined by the Board of Governors for four-year and five-year baccalaureate degree programs in BOG 4.1.5[R]
2. Campuses will develop academic policies within the regulations established by the UNC General Administration on:
 - a. Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP)
 - b. Course Adjustment Periods ("Drop/Add")
 - c. Course Withdrawal
 - d. Grade Exclusion or Replacement
 - e. Minimum, Maximum, and Average Course Load

¹ The North Carolina School of Science and Mathematics shall track data on student attrition, completion rates of its high school curriculum, and high school graduation. See G.S. 116-235.

3. Campuses will establish a student success and support structure to review and to issue regular reports on:
 - a. retention, academic progression, graduation, and time to degree
 - b. course scheduling as it relates to whether courses required for graduation are offered on a timely basis and with an adequate number of sections and seats
 - c. course offerings and grade requirements to assess if any undue additions to general education requirements exist or if such requirements unintentionally lengthen time to graduation
 - d. the academic advisement system to ensure students receive appropriate assistance in proceeding toward graduation in a timely manner
4. Campuses will be compliant with Title IV regulations that define student eligibility for and receipt of federal financial aid.
5. Campuses will be compliant with the Comprehensive Articulation Agreement with the NCCCS and are encouraged to develop policies that promote seamless transfer among schools in the University of North Carolina system.

These policies are designed to ensure that campus and system-wide policies and practices facilitate behaviors that support retention and timely graduation.

The President shall establish regulations to implement the requirements of this policy.

The UNC Policy Manual
400.1.5[R]

Regulations Related to Fostering Student Success

I. Limiting Hours for Baccalaureate Degree Programs

Baccalaureate degree programs shall be limited to no more than 128 semester hours. Any requirement beyond 128 hours must be approved by the Board of Governors. Any program authorized by the Board of Governors to require 135 semester hours or more shall be officially designated as a five-year baccalaureate program.

- A. Campuses shall observe these guidelines in all proposals for new degree programs.
- B. Campuses must publicize the normal number of hours and projected length of full-time enrollment required to obtain the baccalaureate degrees in both printed and online catalogs. During orientation sessions and in publications, campuses must provide a description of factors that may extend the length of time to successful completion of the degree for individual students.

II. Student Success Policies

A. Satisfactory Academic Progress and Good Academic Standing

Satisfactory Academic Progress and Good Academic Standing are determined by:

- 1. Term Grade Point Average
- 2. Cumulative Grade Point Average
- 3. Number of successfully completed credit hours

Upon initial admission, a student is in good academic standing. If a student meets the criteria in all three areas, the student is considered to be making Satisfactory Academic Progress, remains in Good Academic Standing, and is eligible to continue enrollment in the University.

All undergraduates in the University of North Carolina system must earn and maintain a minimum cumulative GPA of 2.0 to be in Good Academic Standing and making Satisfactory Academic Progress.

All campuses in the University of North Carolina system must develop an academic progress policy that defines the ratio of attempted to earned hours required for continued enrollment. Title IV regulations for Satisfactory Academic Progress shall be the minimum allowable standard.

Any student falling below one or more of the standards for Satisfactory Academic Progress and Good Academic Standing may be subject to dismissal from the University.

Campuses may develop policies that allow students falling below one or more of these standards to be placed on academic warning and/or academic probation². These policies must, at the minimum, be in accord with Title IV regulations and should include the use of academic success contracts where appropriate.

These policies must be widely distributed in all campus academic and financial aid materials. Students should be informed of these policies at orientation.

B. The Course Adjustment Period (“Drop/Add”)

The Course Adjustment Period will be established as the time during which students may drop or add courses without academic penalty (i.e., no impact on the Grade Point Average (GPA) or attempted hours). Campuses may choose to make the period for adding courses and the period for dropping courses the same or different; however, both the drop and add periods must be concluded by the census date.³

Campuses may set policies that allow faculty to drop students administratively if they do not attend the course by the end of the Course Adjustment Period.⁴ These policies must be publicized to students. Faculty using this option must have a limited window to take such action in order to complete the drop without causing the student to incur financial penalties other than those normally applied during the

² Campuses are not under obligation to enact policies for either academic probation or warning below the allowable standards.

³ For regular term instruction, the census date is the 10th class day of the fall and spring semesters. For summer sessions, degree credit extension courses, and any other degree-credit courses taught on an irregular calendar, the census date is the class day representing the passage of 10 percent of the instructional period. Policy Manual 400.1.8[R]

⁴ If the course is offered online, the instructor may administratively drop the student from the course if the student has not signed in by the end of the course adjustment period.

course adjustment period. Campuses may allow faculty to add students into those seats in a timely fashion under clear guidelines set by the campus.

Campus business practices⁵ determine if adjustments made during “drop/add” result in any refund or additional charges to the student. Any financial repercussions to students must be publicized in campus academic and financial aid policy describing the Course Adjustment Period.

Title IV regulations shall be the minimum standard for all policies related to student refunds during the course adjustment period.

C. Course Withdrawal⁶

Students are expected to complete all the courses for which they are registered at the close of the Course Adjustment Period. These courses must be recorded on the transcript and receive a grade that is used in the calculation of a GPA, count as attempted hours, count toward the tuition surcharge calculation⁷, and conform to all financial aid and Satisfactory Academic Progress rules *unless* withdrawal is permitted under conditions described below:

1. Extenuating circumstances and military service⁸.

Campuses will develop policies that permit a student to withdraw from a course or courses at any time and without academic penalty for serious extenuating circumstances or for military service. These policies must describe a clear process that defines the documentation required, the nature of the review by a designated campus body or official, and an opportunity for appeal at the campus level.

Any approved withdrawal for extenuating circumstances must be noted on the transcript. The Courses must be included in attempted hours, but they will not count in the calculation of the GPA.

⁵ All campus business practices must conform to UNC FIT Student Account Standards.

⁶ All campus policies on withdrawal must include policies about refunds and conform to UNC FIT Financial Aid and Student Account Standards.

⁷ Summer courses are excluded from the tuition surcharge.

⁸ A more complete discussion of policies regarding military service can be found at Policy TBD.

Campuses must have a separate transcript notation appropriate for students who withdraw for active or reserve military service. The courses must be included in attempted hours, they will not count in the calculation of the GPA.

Courses that are not appropriately documented as approved for withdrawal must be noted on the transcript, and have a grade assigned that is calculated in the GPA and counted in the calculation of attempted hours.

2. Course withdrawals without extenuating circumstances and/or military service

After the initial course adjustment period, campuses may develop policies that allow students to withdraw from one or more courses without meeting the standards for withdrawals for extenuating circumstances and/or military service. These policies must specify the maximum number⁹ of such withdrawals permitted over the course of a student's degree or degrees. The policies must be consistent with campus goals for timely graduation of students.

Any policy developed for course withdrawal under this section must require:

- a. that a W be recorded on the transcript
- b. that the course(s) count as attempted hours
- c. that the course(s) count in surcharge calculations
- d. that the course(s) are subject to all financial aid and SAP rules and calculations

Campus policies must include a deadline for such withdrawal at a date no later than the completion of 60% of the term¹⁰.

D. Course Repeats

Campus policies on course repeats must conform, at the minimum, to Title IV Federal Financial Aid standards with regard to course repeats. Students receiving financial aid cannot be treated differently from students not on such aid.

⁹ The committee suggests four courses or up to 16 semester hours be set as a maximum, although examination of campus level data should be used determine the most appropriate number to balance use of resources and support of student success.

¹⁰ The calculation of this date should begin with the first day of classes and conclude on the last day of regular class meetings. It should exclude the reading day and exam period.

In addition, all campus policies on course repeats must, at the minimum:

- Include on the student transcript all attempts to complete a course,
- Count all attempts to complete a course in calculations of satisfactory academic progress,
- Count all attempts to complete a course in the surcharge calculation in accordance with BOG 100.1.5[R], and
- Use all grades earned in a course in the calculation of the GPA, unless the grade can be excluded through a grade exclusion or replacement policy.

E. Forgiveness Policies

Campuses may establish policies that permit a student who is suspended from school due to academic performance to be readmitted after a specified period of time and to have a modified or new GPA calculation.

F. Grade Exclusion or Replacement

Campuses must develop policies on grade exclusion or replacement¹¹. These policies must specify a maximum number allowed¹² and should support campus goals for student success. Campus policies that permit either replacement or exclusion must provide for:

- the inclusion on the transcript of both the initial grade earned for the course and a notation of its exclusion from or replacement in the calculation of the GPA, and
- the inclusion of the course(s) in both the calculations of satisfactory academic progress and the tuition surcharge.

G. Minimum, Maximum, and Average Course Load

A minimum “full-time” undergraduate load is defined as 12 credit hours per semester. In advising and other communications, campuses shall encourage full-time students to consider an average semester load of 15 credit hours, when possible, to stay on track for a timely graduation. Campuses may allow students in

¹¹ The development of a policy does not imply that a campus must allow grade replacement and/or exclusion. A policy may simply state that the campus does not allow such.

¹² The committee discussed two courses or up to 8 semester hours be set as a maximum, although examination of campus level data should be used determine the most appropriate number to balance use of resources and support of student success.

good academic standing to enroll in up to 18 semester hours in a fall or spring term without any special permission. No student shall exceed 18 semester hours in a fall or spring term without special permission as designated by campus policy. Campuses shall develop appropriate policies for a maximum load in summer terms.

III. Student Success Review and Reporting

Campuses will establish a student success support structure of one or more committees comprised of the appropriate officials from areas such as admissions, registrar's office, financial aid, advising, the counseling center, the cashier's office, and faculty governance to review and to issue regular reports on:

A. Retention and Graduation

Each campus shall, in consultation with General Administration, establish goals for retention¹³ and graduation¹⁴ for first-time, full-time students. Campuses shall also work with General Administration to develop a tracking model for the retention and graduation rates of transfer students.

General Administration will report annually on the success of first time and transfer students at both the campus and system level.

B. Additional Success Measures

Campuses shall work with the General Administration to develop common output measures of student success and achievement in support of academic progress goals.

C. Review of Course Scheduling and Offerings

Campuses shall develop policies to monitor whether all courses necessary for graduation are offered on a timely basis and with an adequate number of sections.

¹³ For purposes of reporting on first-time, full-time students, retention rate shall be defined as "the percentage of first-time degree-seeking undergraduates from the previous fall who are again enrolled in the current fall." (<http://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/glossary/>)

¹⁴ For purposes of reporting, graduation rate data shall be collected as defined by "the number of students entering the institution as full-time, first-time undergraduate students in a particular year (cohort), completing their program within 150 percent of normal time to completion. It shall be calculated by race/ethnicity and gender." (<http://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/glossary/>)

As a part of this review, campuses shall determine:

- if general education requirements (e.g., themes, designators, etc.) allow appropriate student progress,
- If excessive or unnecessary specification or augmentation of general education courses for certain majors places an undue burden on students changing majors, and
- If excessive GPA or course grade requirements for admission to or completion of a major are delaying student progress toward graduation.

These evaluations will be prepared on a three-year cycle and will examine data from the previous three academic years. General Administration will consult with campuses to develop the reporting format and required data.

D. Advising

Campuses shall develop policies to monitor the availability of appropriate and timely academic advising, particularly for first-time undergraduates and first-semester transfer students to:

- assist students in making effective decisions
- increase the potential for students selecting appropriate courses and schedules
- provide students with assistance in selecting a major in a timely fashion
- prevent excessive changes of major
- increase student awareness of an appropriate course load and academic assistance available to them.

This review should take place on a three-year cycle and examine data from the previous three academic years. General Administration will consult with campuses to develop the reporting format and required data.

E. Early Warning System Regulation Proposal

Each campus will have an early warning system (EWS) to alert campus personnel to signs of poor academic performance by a student or of behavior likely to lead to a student's poor academic performance. Each campus will submit a comprehensive intervention plan to General Administration that describes how students are identified by the EWS, what campus staff or faculty are notified when a student is identified by the EWS, and how the staff or faculty member is to respond.

Interventions may include written communication with students, phone calls or text messages, face-to-face meetings with campus personnel, and/or formal programs involving extended student participation.

The plan should specify what interventions will be used, who will be responsible for them, how warnings will be communicated to responsible personnel, and how interventions will be tracked and reported.

Each campus will identify strategies to assess the effectiveness of its EWS and use the results for improvement.

IV. Regulations on Student Financial Aid and Title IV

All campuses will develop financial aid disclosure practices that will, at the minimum, include entrance and exit counseling for students receiving financial aid.¹⁵

All campus policies will be compliant with Title IV Regulations, including, but not limited to, the following:

A. Common definition of the federal Title IV regulation that defines a student as eligible for federal financial aid for up to 150% of normal time to graduation.

Four-year degree requirements in the University of North Carolina system range from 120 hours as the minimum for a four year degree and 128 hours as the maximum. The system will use 120 hours as the common definition for defining federal financial aid eligibility, making 180 hours the limit for 150% of normal time to graduation.

Campuses will define procedures whereby a student completing 180 or more attempted hours will undergo an automatic review to determine continued federal financial aid eligibility. If the student is enrolled in a program requiring more than 120 hours, the appropriate allowance will be calculated on campus based on the exact number of credits required for that degree.

These policies must be widely distributed in all campus academic and financial aid materials.

B. Guidelines to monitor first undergraduate degree completion

¹⁵ All campus policies on disclosure practices must conform to UNC FIT Financial Aid and Student Account standards.

Federal regulations require that campuses monitor first undergraduate degree completion and offer no additional federal grant aid (e.g. Pell, SEOG) after a student earns the initial undergraduate degree. Under federal rules, a student can take out federal loans for a second degree, if eligible. To enforce compliance, campuses must develop protocols for

- monitoring student degree completion each term (fall, spring, summer), and
- for advising students of their status.

These policies must be widely distributed in all campus academic and financial aid materials.

V. Compliance with the Comprehensive Articulation Agreement (CAA) with the North Carolina Community College System and Transfer within the UNC System

Campuses will be compliant with the Comprehensive Articulation Agreement with the NCCCS.

Campuses will be encouraged to develop policies that provide a student at any UNC campus who has successfully completed¹⁶ the general education requirements will be considered, if applying as a transfer student, to have completed general education requirements at another UNC campus.

Any change by a campus in its General Education requirements must be consistent with the CAA.

VI. Information Distribution

To ensure that students receive policy information that is both comprehensive and timely, campuses must develop broad based communications plans that inform students about,

- Recommended course loads, required numbers of earned hours, and the projected length of full- time enrollment needed to obtain the baccalaureate degrees;
- Factors that may extend the length of time to successful completion of the degree;
- Requirements for good standing and Satisfactory Academic Progress; and
- The course adjustment period and other policies on course withdrawal, course repeat, and grade replacement or exclusion and their potential financial consequences.

¹⁶ To be eligible for inclusion in this policy, a student must have an overall GPA of at least 2.0 on a 4.0 scale at the time of transfer and a grade of "C" or better in all core courses.